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Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, recommending an appropriation to send commissioners to all Indian tribes west of the Mississippi River

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COMMISSIONERS TO INDIAN TRIBES.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

RECOMMENDING

An appropriation to send commissioners to all Indian tribes west of the Mississippi river.

FEBRUARY 14, 1867.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed,

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

Washington, D. C., February 14, 1867.

SIR: I transmit herewith a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, addressed by him to me on the 11th instant, accompanied by reports to the Indian Bureau, giving information in regard to the temper, conduct, and purposes of the Indian tribes on our southwestern frontier.

The Commissioner asks for an appropriation of \$150,000 to enable this department, within the present year, to send commissioners to all the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi river, with a view to the restoration of friendly and peaceful relations between the United States and such tribes and bands as are now hostilely disposed, and the ultimate aggregation of all the Indians upon suitable reservations to be set apart for them, where, it is hoped, they will in a very few years, if peaceful relations shall be preserved, become self-sustaining.

Fully concurring in the views expressed by the Commissioner, and impressed with the conviction that, if the sum asked for is placed at the disposal of the department, and faithfully and judiciously applied for the purposes indicated, it will save the necessity of the expenditure of very much larger sums which will otherwise have to be expended in efforts to repress hostilities, to guard our frontier settlements from the incursions of marauding bands, to protect the travelled routes over the plains, and to give security to the immigrant parties now constantly making their way to the west, I earnestly invite your attention to the proposition of the Commissioner, and ask for it your favorable consideration and action.

An estimate of the sum asked for is herewith submitted.

Very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

O. H. BROWNING, *Secretary.*

Hon. SCHUYLER COLFAX

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OFFICE INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., February 11, 1867.

I will submit to you, as briefly as possible consistent with the importance of the subject, my views of the policy which should be pursued to effect a peaceable and reasonably speedy settlement of the Indian question.

That great trouble exists at this time between the whites and Indians is beyond any doubt, and it would indeed be surprising if this were not so, owing to the sudden overflowing of the whites throughout the Indian country, caused by the discovery of gold and silver and the rapid settlement of all the western Territories.

The Indian's home and his hunting grounds have been invaded, and the result is that he is brought face to face and in daily contact with the whites. It is very evident that, as the wants of the Indians and the whites are entirely different, this leads to conflict. The question presented now is, how can this be avoided? It is very plain that there are but two ways to effect this: one is, to destroy these people as speedily as possible; and the other is, to drive them out of the way of white settlements and the routes of travel.

To effect the former, besides its inhumanity, will cost millions of dollars, thousands of lives of our people, and a general Indian war throughout the country between the Missouri river and the Rocky mountains, which would stop the settlement of all our western Territories, and, to a great extent, destroy Kansas and Nebraska.

I desire to avoid the latter result; and this has been my policy since I have assumed the duties of this office. I believe this entire population can be withdrawn on reservations out of the way of the whites, where, in a few years, they could be made to a great extent self-sustaining. To accomplish this object in a speedy and proper manner, more definite information is needed by this bureau than is now in its possession. To obtain this information my idea is to appoint separate commissioners of first-rate men to visit each State and Territory having an Indian population, with instructions to these commissioners to master the Indian subject in the State or Territory they are sent to; that is, ascertain the number of Indians, their status socially, and in every other way; find out if they can be aggregated on one or two reservations; select the section of country where this reservation should be; how much should be paid annually to them in the way of annuity until they can support themselves; what kind of goods should be furnished, if any; how much stock of cattle and sheep; and, indeed, to master the subject fully and thoroughly and report the result of their labors, say next fall, for final action.

It cannot be doubted that a commission of good men, properly selected, could go, for instance, to Arizona or New Mexico, and on the ground study this question, and report a plan by which the Indian question in that locality would be forever settled. The same thing can be done with all other States and Territories having this population.

I have thought a great deal on this subject, and am confident it can be made to succeed. To carry out this plan an appropriation is necessary. It will take some eight or ten different commissioners, and the persons going out should be reasonably well paid, and ample time allowed them to investigate into the subject.

I would, therefore, ask for an appropriation of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars; some twenty thousand dollars of this money, however, to be used for holding an Indian council with the Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Lipans, Mescaleros, and other Indians roaming in the southern and western part of Kansas, the northern extremity of Texas, the eastern line of New Mexico and the 98th parallel of longitude.

I have no doubt that by holding a council with these people at an early day,

say in the month of May, that they can be withdrawn from the settled portions of Kansas, and the great routes of travel leading to New Mexico and the proposed line of railroad now being built, known as the Atlantic and Pacific railroad.

This council should be held this spring, as it is of absolute necessity if we desire to withdraw these Indians from this line of road.

If it did not render this communication too lengthy, I think I could demonstrate that all our Indian tribes could easily be withdrawn on to reservations. There is certainly country enough for them and for us. I would propose to make the reservations quite large, for the reason, first, that it costs nothing to make them large, as the title is only possessory, and these lands will revert back to our posterity as these Indians pass away, and as the present generation has more land than it can possibly use.

I repeat, it will cost nothing to make them large, yet by making the mlarge you keep away from these people the white population, and you obtain ample territory to raise their herds of cattle and sheep; also sufficient grounds for cultivation.

Permit me, therefore, to request you to lay this communication before the two houses of Congress at as early a day as possible, so as to obtain action during this session, if the views herein expressed are favorably considered by that body.

The appropriation of \$150,000 is necessary to carry out these views.

I am, with great respect, your obedient servant,

LEWIS V. BOGY,
Commissioner.

Hon. O. H. BROWNING,

Secretary of the Interior, Washington City.

P. S.—I send with this report copies of letters received this morning from the governor of Texas, showing the necessity of an Indian council at an early day, as mentioned in my report.

LEWIS V. BOGY.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

Austin, Texas, January 29, 1867.

SIR: Having heretofore called your attention to the bands of Kickapoo and other Indians sheltering on the west bank of the Rio Grande in the vicinity of Eagle Pass, and above, and who are depredating upon the frontier of Texas, and presuming the department desires all the information concerning them that is reliable, I take the liberty of forwarding herewith copy of part of a letter from the Hon. R. W. Black, of this State, who was requested by me to ascertain their disposition, locality, number, and the prisoners among them.

Very recently the commanding officer of the United States forces at Fort Clarke attacked and broke up a band of these raiders while on one of their marauding expeditions. I approve of the suggestions of Mr. Black, in regard to the removal of the Kickapoos, and the probable chances of the others being induced to go with them. My judgment is that some officer of the army should be authorized to act in conjunction with whoever may be sent by the Indian department to treat with these people, and such officer should be instructed to take the necessary steps to remove the Kickapoos to their old home.

Mr. Black is a very proper person, and I can commend him to your entire

confidence if you deem it proper to send one to treat or see them. I trust it may be done at an early moment.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. W. THROCKMORTON,

Governor of Texas.

Hon. LEWIS V. BOGY,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

P. S.—I hope an effort will be made by the department to secure the return of the captives now held by these Lipans and other Indians in Mexico. There are known to be several taken from Texas.

T.

SAN JUAN DE ALLENDE, MEXICO,

January 6, 1867.

DEAR SIR: Yours of the 6th ultimo was duly received. Since I have been over on this side of the river I have conversed with one of the men that was sent up to the Lipan camp to recover some horses that had been stolen from the different towns near here. He tells me that there are with the Lipans both Mescaleros and Gila Indians; these latter Indians I suppose must come down from New Mexico. Between the different tribes they muster between eighty and one hundred fighting men and boys. The two latter tribes did not come down to the lower camp, but sent word by the Lipans that they wished to treat with the Mexican authorities for peace. He says that they have four American children of some eight or ten years of age—one girl and three boys; he saw two of them. The Indians offered him either one of them for \$100.

I have written to Governor Viesca asking him to insist on the delivery of the captives before they make peace with them. There have come in to Moreles, (about four miles from here,) in the last few days, some eight or ten families of Lipans, with only one man, and now are living there. The Kickapoos are doing a good deal of mischief in stealing horses from these towns, and the Mexicans are getting very tired of them.

I am satisfied, if I had the authority from the United States government to treat with these different tribes, I could not only succeed in inducing the Kickapoos to return to Missouri, but most probably take these fragments of other tribes with them, thereby ridding the entire southern Texan frontier of Indian depredations. After the removal of these small bands and the establishing of the military posts on the El Paso road, it will be very easy to prevent any Indians living south of said road, and consequently it would be much easier to follow any band of Comanches that make a business of crossing into Mexico on stealing expeditions.

R. W. BLACK.

His Excellency J. W. THROCKMORTON, *Governor, &c.*

STATE OF TEXAS, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

Austin, January 30, 1867.

SIR: In addition to the information sent you yesterday concerning Kickapoo and other Indians, I have the honor also to forward you the report of Lieutenant McCafferty, United States army, made to Major General Griffin, upon the same subject, a copy of which has been kindly furnished me by the commanding officer of this military district.

It will be seen from Lieutenant McCafferty's report that these Indians constitute quite a formidable body to be situated as they now are, with their determined and continued hostile intentions, rendering it the more important that speedy measures should be adopted to remove them, or render their proximity harmless.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. W. THROCKMORTON,

Governor of Texas.

Hon. LEWIS V. BOGY,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT 4TH U. S. CAVALRY,

Fort Inge, Texas, December 26, 1866.

SIR: In compliance with instructions received in Brevet Major General Griffin's indorsement on Mr. R. W. Black's letter of November 28, 1866, in reference to depredations committed on this frontier by Indians and Mexicans, I have the honor to submit the following report:

After a thorough investigation, I find that the Kickapoo, Lipan, and Mesquero Indians are still living on the west bank of the Rio Grande, the majority of them encamped near Santa Rosa; as near as I can ascertain, they number about one thousand warriors, and are well supplied with fire-arms. Until about the 1st of December there were no troops stationed on this part of the frontier but the detachment at this post, which only numbered thirty-eight mounted men; consequently their depredations were numerous, as the citizens but rarely followed them, and the effective force at this post being so small as to render it impracticable to keep a sufficient number continually on the move, and having so large a line of frontier to guard, it was not difficult for the Indians to evade the troops.

Since the posts along this line of frontier have been occupied, depredations are becoming less frequent, and, I believe, will in a very short time entirely cease.

The statement that Mexicans have been guilty of some of the depredations that have been committed on this frontier does not admit of a doubt, but, like the Indians, they have as yet managed to escape without punishment.

Within the last week the force at this post has been fully mounted, which will enable it to render more effective service in future.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. J. McCAFFERTY,

First Lieut. 4th U. S. Cavalry, Commanding Post.

GEORGE C. POTWIN,

Brevet Captain, A. A. A. General,

Headquarters District of Texas, Galveston, Texas.